

WELCH, HAROLD KEE

DRAWER 19A

A, 1.54- W

11. 2003. 025 02704




# Artists of Abraham Lincoln portraits

Harold Kee Welch

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

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*A Visual  
History of  
Springfield, Illinois  
on Display  
at The  
First National  
Bank of  
Springfield*

# SPRINGFIELD: A PORTRAIT



On May 23, 1964, First National Bank of Springfield unveiled a 16 foot by 80 foot mural depicting the colorful history of Springfield and Sangamon County. Painted by renowned artist Harold Kee Welch and affixed to the west wall of the bank lobby, **SPRINGFIELD: A PORTRAIT**, records in perpetuity the community's beginnings, its present and its future.

To the pioneers who have given us a proud heritage, to the people who today make Springfield a dynamic city, to the generations who will continue these traditions in the years ahead, this portrait is dedicated.

# THE ARTIST:

*Harold Kee Welch*





Nationally-known muralist Harold Kee Welch is an Illinois native, who lives where he was born, in the heart of the beautiful Spoon River country at Smithfield.

He studied at the Chicago Art Institute and worked with leading muralists as well as with commercial and fine artists. In 1960 he broke new artistic ground when he used a carborundum drill to etch into a 5 foot by 12 foot sheet of Plexiglas a mural honoring the great names of printing history. Done for Miehle-Goss-Dexter of Chicago, the unique mural, the first example of top lighting as an art form, graces the board room of the printing equipment firm.

A few years ago, after a long and successful career in commercial art he was commissioned to do a mural for two walls of the officer quarters at the Bank of Cuba, Illinois. *Springfield: A Portrait* is by far the largest work he has done, consuming more than a year's time.

A resemblance in his style to that of Diego Riviera's Mexico City murals is not entirely coincidental. A Mexico enthusiast, Welch has spent months living in and traveling through Mexico. Among his commercial art commissions was a series of paintings for American Airlines done around Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

# WHAT THE MURAL PORTRAYS

Bands of Kickapoo and Potawatomi Indians roamed the valley of the Sangamon river when the early settlers moved into the territory by river and land in 1817. They built forts, tilled the land, and traded with the Indians. Stores, mills and taverns marked the beginning of the business development of the community.

The principal figure in this giant mural is a 14½ foot spirit-like vision of Abraham Lincoln with his solemn war-weary face. Upper left, his tomb; below is the youthful woodsman; in the background his four log cabin homes beginning with his birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Then Gentryville, Indiana, the one he helped his father build at Goose Neck Prairie, Illinois, and

the cabin near Decatur, Illinois. Finally, the Springfield house and the White House.

At the right a middle-aged Lincoln with his six weeks growth of beard makes his famous farewell address to the people of Springfield from the back of the train. Behind him on the train is his wife Mary. Ann Rutledge is shown sitting at the feet of the monumental Lincoln.

Top right, the close relationship between the people and the banks in times of strife is symbolized by the war groups, first the Civil War with Lincoln visiting McClellan in the field, then World Wars I and II. Scarcely one month after Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address in 1863, the First National Bank of Springfield was founded.

The mural dramatizes the eventful years that follow and the part First National Bank played in fostering the growth of the city of Springfield.

The industrial and business development continues across the bottom to the right of the Lincoln section. Shown are the itinerant merchant, the small businesses, the modern office structures, state buildings including the state capitol, together with the Rees Carillon and the city skyline tying-in with the map of Illinois and the gold-leaf map of Sangamon County.

Continuing across the bottom section are the schools, school children, hospitals and churches, then the larger figures of tradesmen, businessmen and legislators all building together with confi-

dence. Springfield's four principal industries — agriculture, manufacturing, milling and insurance — are depicted here in four revolving free shapes. Between these shapes are the prize winning livestock, the racing horses and racing cars, the stadium and racetrack of the State Fair.

Leading into this group from the upper right are the housewives, farmers, 4-H and FFA members with blue ribbon fruits, grain, vegetables, cakes and canned goods.

On the right end of the mural the three modes of transportation are depicted as they apply to moving the bountiful products of this flourishing community.

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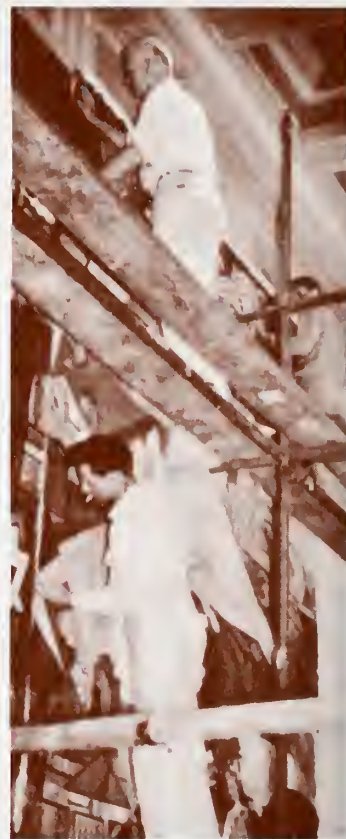
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# INSTALLATION



The mural was painted on canvas strips 10 feet wide by 16 feet long. When completed, the strips were hung on the lobby wall by a decorating firm. Ten 200 watt, adjustable “wall washer” spotlights in the ceiling illuminate the mural without causing highlights.



All of us at First National Bank of Springfield are proud of this contribution to the culture of one of America's most historic cities. We hope you enjoy viewing the mural often as our guest. You and your friends will always be welcome.

*The First National Bank of Springfield* The logo consists of the word "first" in a stylized, cursive script, enclosed within a circular border with a scalloped or dotted edge.







WELCH, HAROLD KEE

DRAWER 14A

A. 1. 5th - W

WELCH, HAROLD KEE

PERIOD

1940-1941

